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<b>FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE</b>
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## WSDOT's Incident Response Team Ready to help ease congestion

In an effort to ease congestion, WSDOT will roll out its expanded statewide Incident Response Team (IRT) program on July 3<sup>rd</sup> – just in time for motorists hitting the road to enjoy the Fourth of July holiday. A total of 44 units will be clearing roads and helping drivers on 35 highway segments statewide. This includes two Incident Response units in the metropolitan Spokane area. IRT's primary role includes supporting the Washington State Patrol (WSP) at an incident scene, assisting motorists with flat tires, jump starts, or gas, and keeping highway lanes and shoulders unobstructed.

The Spokane area has had an on-call incident response crew for several years. Since mid-November 2001, an incident response truck has been patrolling Interstate 90 between the Four Lakes Interchange and Liberty Lake, as part of a pilot program.

The results of the pilot program in Spokane were excellent. During the test, the crew handled three to four times as many incidents than they did when the service was on an on-call basis, plus they now make 20 to 40 service patrol contacts with individual motorists per week. This has allowed the clearing/removal of stranded motorists expeditiously resulting in more efficient traffic flows. Studies have shown that 60% of all congestion on urban freeways result from collisions, disabled vehicles, spills, and other events that impede normal traffic flow. Depending on the volume of traffic on the road, four to ten minutes of traffic congestion can result from every minute a lane remains blocked.

Incident Response units will continue to be on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, but under the expansion, units will now rove on I-90 every weekday. Also, as a part of the special emphasis for this holiday weekend, the Spokane Incident Response Teams will patrol I-90 plus U.S. 395 and U.S. 2 in northern Spokane County during the peak travel period on Sunday, July 7<sup>th</sup>.

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